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P 261351Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0075
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO PRIORITY 1241

UNCLAS PARAMARIBO 000121

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR WHA/PDA CHAD WEST, WHA/CAR FOR JROSHOLT, ECA FOR BLAKENEY VASQUEZ, CAMILLE BARROSSE, AND PETER COZZENS, POSTS FOR PAOS/CAOS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OEXC OPRC NS

SUBJECT: STATE SENATOR PROMOTES U.S. DEMOCRACY FOR FREE

REF: PARAMARIBO 117

¶1. (U) Summary: With PD resources already exhausted, Post has sought to maintain cultural and outreach programming through the use of "window of opportunity" speakers (ref A, septel). Taking advantage of the presence of South Dakota State Senator Tom Katus, in Suriname under the auspices of the South Dakota National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP), Post organized a representational lunch with leaders of business organizations and a lecture to students at the University on the U.S. political system and elections held at the University.

¶2. (U) Type of Program: Post-organized "Window-of-Opportunity" speaker. MSP Goals addressed: Goal No. 1: Mutual U.S./Suriname appreciation and respect contributing to a more effective partnership.

¶3. (U) Background: South Dakota State Senator Tom Katus came to Suriname March 2-6, 2008 as a member of a delegation sponsored by the South Dakota National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP) with Suriname. At his request, the Senator participated in several meetings with local groups and organizations, including Amerindians. The DCM hosted a lunch with business leaders for Katus, whose "day job" is as consultant on business affairs. The newly-dedicated "Democracy Center" at Suriname's only university, Anton de Kom invited Katus to speak on the U.S. elections and the electoral process.

¶4. (U) Evaluation of Speaker: Senator Katus emanated genuine sincerity and interest during his interactions with Surinamers. He is a natural storyteller. However, at times he went into too much detail or strayed from the topic to elaborate on examples from the South Dakota experience, thus losing his audience from time to time. Therefore, it was necessary for the Embassy escorts or audience members to bring him back on point. Nonetheless, the presence of a U.S. politician generated interest among university students and professors, and provided an appropriate opportunity for the Embassy to engage them and support the recently dedicated Democracy Center at the University.

¶5. (U) Program Coordination: Several history and law professors coordinated the university lecture. These professors undertook the logistical arrangements, handled invitations, and took out newspaper ads,

¶6. (U) Program Costs: The only direct cost to Post was a small representational lunch hosted by the DCM in the Senator's honor with the heads of the major organizations in Suriname as guests.

¶7. (U) Impact of the Program: This program strengthened

contacts and the working relationship between the University and the Embassy, as well as the Embassy's relationship with the heads of several business organizations. Outreach to university students is an area of interest to the Embassy. In addition, the lecture continued a series on U.S. elections begun by PolOff for a University class. In addition, after Senator Katus's lecture an attendee asked PolOff to speak further on elections to his political party in April. The program also demonstrated USG commitment to strengthening mutual respect and appreciation between Americans and Surinamers, consistent with MSP goals.

SCHREIBER HUGHES